

As a former ombudsman in New York, who worked with senior citizens on a regular basis, I understand the financial pressures that senior citizens are under. Usually, they're on a fixed income. The majority of them are under a doctor's care. And some of them even permanently reside in a convalescent care center.

The point is, Mr. Speaker, that unless we act now those same individuals will be needlessly exposed to a world without adequate health care—and this group numbers close to 37 million.

Healthy, strong seniors, living independently, must be our goal. We must save Medicare. The alternative is simply unacceptable.

This isn't about politics—This is simply about the lives of 37 million people who are depending on us.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say I've signed my name on the dotted line, and I will keep my promise.

DEMOCRATS ARE SILENT ON HOW TO SAVE MEDICARE

(Mr. SCARBOROUGH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, in what should be one of most important issues on their agenda, the Democrats have come up unbelievably silent on the issue of what to do to save Medicare.

The trustees have said Medicare goes bankrupt in 7 years. Yet the Democrats are doing nothing about it. They are intellectually bankrupt on this issue. In fact the Baltimore Sun has said how the intellectual initiative has switched from the Democrats to the Republicans is visible in the fears debate over Medicare. Bill Clinton's Democrats find themselves defending the status quo.

Unfortunately, they also find themselves playing politics Richard Nixon style. Nixon once said that people vote their fears. That is what the Democrats are counting on.

The Republican Party this year is counting on the people going out and voting their hopes and dreams and rewarding those who dare to step into the arena and fight and get themselves bloodied to save Medicare for the next century.

DEMOCRATS PLAYING GAMES WITH MEDICARE

(Mr. JONES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, day after day, the Democrats continue to play games. They are denying the underlining factor that our senior citizens need a helping hand. While seniors fear the bankruptcy of Medicare. The Democrats are threatening to ruin the pensions of hardworking Americans.

We will not use these political games and scare tactics. Instead, we will protect, preserve and improve Medicare for the American people. Our goal is to

ensure Medicare for another 30 years and beyond.

We will streamline and weed out the waste and abuse of this bloated system. In doing so, spending for Medicare will increase. Let me rephrase that—Medicare will not be cut! It will continue to be the fastest growing program. Spending per senior will increase from \$4,800 today to more than \$6,700 in 2002.

Let us solve the matters at hand instead of making excuses. We must work for the people who made this country great.

□ 0920

IT IS WRONG TO CUT MEDICARE TO GIVE TAX BREAKS TO AMERICA'S RICHEST CITIZENS

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, this Sunday all of us across the country celebrate the 30th anniversary of the signing of Medicare. Thirty years ago, leading up to President Johnson's signing Medicare in Independence, Missouri, 93 percent of Republican Members of Congress, including then Congressman BOB DOLE, a Republican from Kansas, opposed the creation of Medicare. In the 1970's and the 1980's, the far right wing of the Republican Party continued to try to dismantle and cut Medicare.

Today, in 1995, literally 99 percent of the Republican Members of this body have voted to make almost \$30 billion in cuts in Medicare. The fact is, prior to Medicare's creation in the mid 1960s, more than half of older Americans did not have health care coverage. Today, 99 percent of America's elderly may have health care coverage. The fact is, Medicare works. It is simply wrong, Mr. Speaker, to cut \$300 billion from Medicare in order to give tax breaks to the richest American citizens. It is simply not right.

WORDS FROM REPUBLICANS CANNOT HIDE THEIR INTENTIONS REGARDING MEDICARE

(Mr. OBEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that we hear some quite cynical remarks about Medicare this morning. Our friends on the Republican side of the aisle say they want to save Medicare, but their actions demonstrate they want to shred it. They say they want to save Medicare, but they took \$90 billion out of it in their recent budget resolution. They say that they want to save Medicare, but when the Congress first passed it, they first tried to stop it, and only after they could not stop it did some of them vote for it. Their own majority leader, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. ARMEY], has

indicated, very frankly, that if this world were shaped to his image, there would be no room in an entrepreneurial society for Medicare.

Pardon me, Mr. Speaker, but their words cannot hide their intentions. America's senior citizens know that.

PERMISSION FOR SUNDRY COMMITTEES AND THEIR SUBCOMMITTEES TO SIT TODAY DURING THE 5-MINUTE RULE

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the following committees and their subcommittees be permitted to sit today while the House is meeting in the Committee of the Whole House under the 5-minute rule: the Committee on Commerce, the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, the Committee on International Relations, the Committee on the Judiciary, and the Committee on National Security.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Reserving the right to object, Mr. Speaker, the democratic leadership has been notified of this, and we have no objection.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my reservation of objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. LEWIS of California. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on the bill, H.R. 2099, and that I be permitted to include tables, charts, and other extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WELLER). Pursuant to House Resolution 201 and rule XXIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 2099.

□ 0923

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2099), making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and